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The Slanted View

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In that dead language of diplomacy which he has mastered, Secretary of State Rusk spoke in Rio last week about many things. He had no doubt that Communism "has lost strength in Latin America," and he also had no doubt that a more effective inter-American "mechanism" is needed to block its advance. We must work together, he said, to "safeguard democratic processes," by which he meant no threat, of course, to the military juntas that govern in Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Nicaragua, or Brazil. His listeners have become learned in this occult language and understood that what Rusk really wants is a force available to knock over or keep out any regime likely to be too friendly to Communists and too unfriendly to US investors. But lest he be accused of letting outsiders decide for the United States what constitutes a "dangerous situation" justifying intervention, Mr. Rusk qualified his endorsement of collective action by adding the words, "if possible." In other words, the US will feel free to act alone if necessary. For, as the Secretary then observed, "no government is prepared to engage its military forces except by a national decision, at the highest level, in the light of the particular circumstance." Not much here to take hold of, or cheer.

But the Latins last week did cheer the audacious Robert F. Kennedy, who has been speaking in a different accent; indeed, in quite a different language. "Throughout the hemisphere," he said, "entrenched privilege resists the demands of justice. In every American land, the dispossessed and the hungry, the landless and the untaught seek a better life for their children. In every American land, in yours and mine no less than in others, a revolution is coming—a revolution which will be peaceful if we are wise enough, compassionate if we care enough, successful if we are fortunate enough—but a revolution which will come whether we will it or not. We can affect its character; we cannot alter its inevitability." The Senator did not defend what the US had done in the Dominican Republic; he opposed it. The most that he would say for it now, is that US troops will withdraw as soon as free elections are held.

Will they be held, and what will they produce? One can't be sure. For when the White House decides that it is our government's duty to determine what government another country can't have, it takes on an obligation of uncertain duration and consequences. Nearly 7,000 US servicemen are still in the Dominican Republic, not to mention FBI and CIA agents, though the "threat" to American lives has faded

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